

Dr. *Chauncy's*
S E R M O N
A T T H E
Boston Thursday-Lecture,
September 3, 1778.



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The accursed Thing must be taken
away from among a People, if they
would reasonably hope to stand
before their Enemies.

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED AT THE
THURSDAY-LECTURE
I N
B O S T O N,

September 3, 1778.

And printed at the Desire of the Hearers.

By CHARLES CHAUNCEY, D. D.

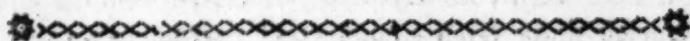
Senior Pastor of the first Church in Boston.

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND:
PRINTED BY THOMAS & JOHN FLEET, 1778.



A

Lecture SERMON.



JOSHUA VII. 13.

—“ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel ! Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.”

THE preceeding chapter gave us an account of *Israel's* besieging *Jericho*, and of the falling of the walls of that fenced city by a marvellous display of the power of almighty God : Upon which it is added in the close of the chapter, “ So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country.” And yet, one of the first things we are acquainted with in the progress of his history is, the defeat he met with in his attempt against *Ai*, a city about nine miles west from *Jericho*. This unhappy defeat filled *Joshua* with great concern, insomuch that he “ rent his cloaths, fell upon his face before the Lord, and put dust upon his head, continuing all day in fasting and prayer.” The words of his prayer we have in the 7th, 8th and 9th verses of the context.

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The good God saw the sincerity of this prayer, notwithstanding the imperfections that attended it, and lets *Joshua* into the true reason why *Israel* fled before their enemies. Says he, in the 11th and 12th verses, " *Israel* hath sinned—they have even taken of the accursed thing—therefore they could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, unless ye remove the accursed thing from among you." And now come in the words of my text, " Thus saith the Lord God of *Israel*, there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O *Israel*! Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." The *accursed thing* in the midst of *Israel* was *Achan's* sin, verse 20, 21.

It would not be unprofitable, should I enlarge in describing this sin, and those circumstances relative to it, which made it so provoking to God; and also in vindicating that awful, but righteous severity with which it was punished. But to do this as it ought to be done, would take up too much of the present time; for which reason I shall pass over all that might be said upon these points, and immediately proceed to employ your thoughts on the text itself; from which the following notes are obviously deducible,

- I. Sin is an *accursed thing*.
- II. This accursed thing is too often in the midst of a people when engaged in war.
- III. They must take away this accursed thing from among them, if they would hope, upon just grounds, to stand before their enemies.

I. Sin

I. Sin is an *accursed thing*. So it is stigmatized by God himself in the text; and with the highest reason.

For 'tis an *accursed thing* in its own *nature*. What this is we may learn from the description which an Apostle has given us of it, 1 *John* iii. 4. "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." i. e. the law of God, however made known, whether by the light of *reason*, or the *revelation* he has made of his will in the scriptures of the old and new testament. Mankind are all under the law of God, in one or other, or both of these senses; and when they transgress this law, they are chargeable with sin. This is its *nature*.

And it carries in its idea *rebellion* against the most *rightful authority*. For nothing is more indisputable than that the God who made us is our *sovereign*, and has a right to give law to us, and demand our subjection. But by sin we practically call in question this right of his, and reflect dishonor on his governing authority. And what is this sort of rebellion against the most sovereign majesty, whose authority carries with it the most binding force, the most indubitable obligation?

It implies in it also horrid contempt of God, and the most slighty regard to him. The language of it is, that his laws are not worth minding; that he either knows not how, or has not taken care, to make laws that are fit to be regarded; and that men can govern themselves much better than they will be governed by an observance of the divine precepts. This is the practical language of sin, whereby the
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wisdom of God is reflected upon, and the supreme Majesty himself treated with contempt.

Moreover, sin practically defies the power and anger of God; for his laws are guarded with sanctions which are awfully severe. He has declared he will arm himself with power, and take vengeance on those who obey not the truth, but unrighteousness. And therefore to violate the laws of God, and to go on in a course of doing so, is a practical declaration that we regard not the anger of God; nor fear what he has threatened to bring upon us. The language of sin is, that we are stronger than the Almighty; at least, that we are not afraid of his power, or his wrath. All this is included in sin, on which account it may, with the highest propriety, be called an *accursed thing*.

Nor is sin an *accursed thing* in its nature only, but in its *effects* and *consequences* also. It has proved a curse, and the most dreadful one by its mischievous effects;

'Tis sin that has *curst* the *ground*, so that it brings forth thorns and thistles, and obliges mankind to toil and pains to get a livelihood out of it. The curse of God upon the ground, by means of sin, is pronounced, *Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19.*

'Tis sin that has brought a *curse* upon our *bodies*, subjecting them to diseases and pains, infinitely various both for kind and degree; yea, exposing them to death, in all manner of forms. The words of the curse are recorded, *Gen. iii. 19.*

'Tis sin that has brought a *curse* upon our *souls*, introducing into them confusion and disorder, weak-
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promoting strife and contention, alienation and disaffection, and crumbling it into numberless parties.

'Tis this that has been the troubler of nations and kingdoms, unsheathing the sword and making them the devourers of one another. 'Tis this that has dethroned princes, ruined cities, depopulated countries, yea, emptied the earth of its inhabitants, filling it with slaughter and bloodshed. And 'tis this also that has "shut up the heavens, and made the rain of a land powder and dust"; 'tis this that has brought "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and destruction that wasteth at noon day"; 'tis this that has caused the earth to tremble, and open its mouth so as to take in thousands of souls at once: Yea, whenever the judgments of God have been abroad in the earth, 'tis sin that has brought them down: To this must they all be attributed as the alone procuring cause.

Nor are these dreadful calamities the worst effects of this *accursed thing*. Its malign influence extends beyond the grave, and reaches even to the eternal world. 'Tis this that guards the heavenly paradise as with a flaming sword, so that there is no admission for sinners, continuing such, into that blessed place: As the Apostle *John* expresses it, "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Nor is this the worst effect of sin yet. 'Tis this that has made the dreadful place in the other world called in scripture *hell*; the *bottomless pit*; the *lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*; the *place of blackness*

blackness of darkness, of weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. If it had not been for sin, there had never been such a place as *hell*; we should never have heard of *the fire that goeth not out, and the worm that dieth not.*

But I need not say any thing more to satisfy you that sin is an *accursed thing*. That is certainly worthy to be spoken of in this stile, which has brought mankind under the curse of God in this world, and exposes them to his curse in the future one. 'Tis of all things the *most accursed*. There is indeed a curse in nothing but by means of sin. This is emphatically the *accursed thing*. And whatever else has a curse in it, is derived from sin.

Let us, my brethren, take care to make a just estimate of sin; not looking upon it as an harmless innocent thing, not entertaining an opinion of it as a slight inconsiderable evil; but as that which is accursed in itself, and carries with it all manner of curses. We must thus conceive of it. 'Tis the first thing necessary to a deliverance from the *curse* it has subjected us to; as it will not only engage us in the work of repentance, but open to our view our infinite indebtedness to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has taken upon him the curse of sin. And this will inspire us with zeal and vigor, in the use of all means, that we may obtain, through him, redemption from the curse of the law and the wrath of God.— But I must not enlarge. 'Tis time that I proceed to the second note from the text, viz.

II. That sin, this *accursed thing*, is too often in the midst of a people, when engaged in war.

This was the charge against *Israel*, now they were gone forth against the nations of *Canaan*. Says the context, " *Israel* hath committed a trespass in the *accursed thing*. *Israel* hath sinned and transgressed my covenant." Nor was this the only time they were chargeable with sin, while engaged in war. We never read of this people, when in a state of war, but they are complained of as having sinned against the Lord their God. And there are scarce any sins but they were prevalent among them. The *Prophets*, whom God sent with his messages to them, testify against their profaneness, their covetousness, their uncleanness, their pride, their hypocrisy, their idolatry, and sometimes their universal debauchery of manners. And it was indeed the prevalence of these and such like sins that engaged them in war, either putting them upon invading the rights of their neighbours, or provoking God to stir up their neighbours to invade theirs. It would be needless to go over the *wars of Israel*, as they are recorded in the old testament, to illustrate this; but if any should chuse to be at this pains, they would find that their *moral* character was always such as might justly give the holy God occasion to complain of them, as in *Isa. i. 4*. " Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of *Israel* to anger."

And is it true of *Israel* only, that the *accursed thing* was in the midst of them when engaged in
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in war? Is not this the charge that may be justly made against our land at this day?—Was it ever in a more corrupt and degenerate state? Was it ever in a more unhappy situation, *morally* speaking, to engage in war? Did we ever hear so loud a cry of oppression? Was common honesty ever at a lower ebb? Were extravagance, intemperance and lewdness ever more general? Were the sabbaths of the Lord ever more prophaned, or his sanctuary more polluted? Was the name of God ever more dishonored by horrid cursing and swearing?—We are, in truth, a sinful people, and have exceedingly provoked the holy one of Israel to anger against us. The *accursed thing* is in the midst of us, impiety towards God, unrighteousness and unmercifulness towards our neighbour, and infobriety with respect to our selves; yea, we have dishonored Christ, neglected his salvation, abused his grace, and grieved his spirit. This, in *general*, though I am grieved to say it, is the true character of the country, at this day, notwithstanding all our pretences, and all our spiritual advantages. A melancholy illustration of the truth we were upon, that the *accursed thing* is too often in the midst of a people when at war with their enemies. I now go on to the next and last note from the words, viz.

III. That a people at war must take away the *accursed thing* from among them, if they would hope, upon just grounds, to stand before their enemies.

You see that *Israel* could not stand before the men of *Ai*: And what was the reason? 'Tis given to *Josbua* by God himself, ver. 11, 12. "Israel hath sinned

sinned—therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies.” And this is but agreeable to the *covenant* which God made with them, after he had brought them out of *Egypt* with a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm. Those are the terms of it, “If ye walk in my statutes and keep my commandments, and do them;—then ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and shall despise my statutes, and not do my commandments;—I also will do this unto you, ye shall be slain before your enemies, ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.” *Lev. xxvi.* And according to the tenor of this *covenant*, it all along happened to *Israel*. While they kept themselves from the *accursed thing*, or soon took it away, they had the better of their enemies, and caused them to *flee* or *fall* before them: But when the *accursed thing* was in the midst of them, and they took no care to remove it away, they fell before their enemies, or run from them, or were delivered into their hands. And as an awful illustration of the truth of my text, and of the threatening contained in God’s *covenant* with *Israel*, they were, about forty years after our Saviour, invaded by the *Romans*, and totally broken up as a people, and scattered among all the nations of the earth, among whom they remain as a taunt and a curse to this very day.

And God will deal, in general, after the same manner, with other people, as he dealt with his *Israel*. While they walk with him, and do that which is right and just and good, he will make their enemies

enemies to be at peace with them, or deliver them into their hands: But if they violate the law of God, and *trespass in the accursed thing*, he will not enable them to stand before their enemies, but will give them into their hands.

'Tis true, the *parties* in the war may both of them have sinned against the Lord; the *accursed thing* may be in the midst of them both: In which case, they are both made use of in the providence of God to chastise one another; and to which of them God will give the advantage is known only to himself; unless that party in the war, whose cause is just, should put away the *accursed thing*: in which case they might upon good grounds hope for help against their enemies, so as to be able to stand before them; yea, and to tread them under their feet. Says God, in the text, "thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the *accursed thing* from among you." It may be worthy of special notice, tho' the *accursed thing* was in the midst of *Israel*, yet this should not hinder their success against their enemies, if they would but take it away. In this case, they might, notwithstanding their former folly, hope to come off with glory and victory.

But the question here is, what are we to understand by this "taking away the accursed thing?" How is it to be done? To which I answer,

If the *accursed thing* is of such a nature that the "civil arm" is necessary to remove it, it is, in this sense, to be taken away. Thus the accursed thing was taken away from *Israel*. The sin of Achan was

a *capital* offence, and it lay with the *civil magistrate*, by cutting off the sinner, to clear the community of guilt. Accordingly, *Joshua and the Elders of Israel* were no sooner made sensible of the sin of Achan, than they brought him under trial, pass sentence upon him, and put it in execution in the face of all Israel. In like manner, when the accursed thing, in the midst of a people, is of a *capital* nature, the civil magistrate must remove it by the death of the offender: or if it be any other crime, which it belongs to them, as guardians to the state, to restrain or punish, they must, in an authoritative way, purge the community of it.

And permit me to say here, as *oppression of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow*, is eminently the *accursed thing* in the midst of us, it ought to be taken away, so far as may be, by the powers ordained of God to be his ministers for good. 'Tis observable, and may be worthy of special notice, there is no prohibition, among the laws of the supreme Legislator, more particularly, expressly, solemnly, and repeatedly urged than this, *thou shalt not oppress the poor, the fatherless, and the widow*. Those therefore who are entrusted with governing authority, would do no more than their duty, and what they are called to by the King of Kings, should they exert themselves to discourage oppression, and guard against it to the utmost of their power, more especially as the *poor, the fatherless, and the widow*, are the distinguished sufferers by it. And should they neglect to restrain and guard against *this kind of oppression*, they could not excuse themselves from the guilt of violating

ing a most expers command of the great King and Judge of all the earth. The 82d Psalm begins with those majestic words, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the gods," that is, among civil magistrates. It then follows, as a peremptory command to them from the Sovereign of the world, "defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy; deliver the poor and needy; rid them out of the hand of the wicked." If it was ever proper, if it ever was, or could be, the duty of the *civil magistrate* to lay restraint upon the malignant vice of oppression, as *widows, fatherless children, and afflicted needy persons* are affected by it, it is eminently so now.

I am sensible it may be difficult, if within the reach of the magistrates skill or power, to remove that injustice, which, like an overbearing flood, has made its way through these American States; occasioned partly by the paper currency, partly by the necessities of people in this day of general calamity, but principally by the undue love of money: But however difficult, or impossible, it may be for the governing power, in the present state of things, effectually to restrain, in general, the affair of *commercial dealing* within the bounds of righteousness, this may be done, and without the least difficulty, in regard of those widows and orphans, together with many others, who have greatly suffered, and are still suffering, by means of a *law of this State*, which obliges them to accept of four or five shillings instead of a pound, or to lose the yearly interest which they depend upon for a subsistence. I fear not to say, that glaring in-

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justice;

justice, and of the worst kind too, wherein it affects the fatherless and widow, is established by this law. It would be a dishonorable reflection on the makers of such an establishment, who are politically dead, to suppose, that their intention was, to give opportunity for the cancelling bonds by the payment of one half or a quarter of their real value. As the emission of *paper-bills* was necessary to the carrying on the war, they might think a law of this kind would tend to prevent their depreciation, and with this view be determined to make it: But as it is now known, notwithstanding this, and every other device, that the depreciation has been amazingly great, and that hundreds and thousands of helpless widows and orphans, to say nothing of others, have been reduced to the utmost distress by means of it, together with the law that has given it an oppressive efficacy, it may reasonably be expected, that *the powers that now be* will interdict the continuance of this law, lest there should be the continuance of that injustice, which would be a disgrace to even a pagan state.

As I am now upon the duty of the civil magistrate, wherein it lies within his sphere, to take away sin, which is an accursed thing, from a people, I would mention the sad case of *salary-men*, and particularly *the Clergy*. So far as I am able to learn, most of the parishes in this State have made their ministers no allowance at all for the depreciation of the currency, and those who have made any have fallen short one half, if not three quarters, of what in reason might have been expected of them. Is it right in people, who have solemnly contracted with their ministers to pay them such a sum, to discharge their obligation

gation with that which amounts to not more than one half, or a quarter, or a seventh part of its real value? Is it consistent with common honesty for people to demand, and to take, of their ministers for labor, for provision, for cloathing, and all the necessities of life, five, six, or seven times more in proportion than they are willing to give them, tho' obliged to it by explicit contract? And shall government, while they know this, sit still, and look upon their oppression without offering them any help? Is this as it ought to be? Especially, as it is owing to *government bills*, and a *government law* making them a tender to discharge contracts, tho' by a *nominal sum*, not worth a third, or it may be a seventh part of the value originally agreed for, that they are thus injured?*

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Surely

* So long ago as May 26, 1725, the *General Court* passed the following Resolve, which it is thought proper to insert at large. It is in these words, "At a Great and General Court or Assembly for his Majesty's Province of Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, begun and held at Boston, upon Wednesday May 26, 1725, the following Resolve pass'd both Houses, and was consented to by his honor the lieutenant Governor, viz.

Upon serious consideration of the great distresses that many of the ministers of the gospel within this province labour under, with respect to their support or maintenance, their salaries being generally paid in the public bills of credit of this province, altho' many of the ministers contracted with their people in the time when Silver Money passed in payment; and the necessities of life, such as cloathing, provisions, together with labour and other things, now demand so much more of the bills of credit than heretofore;

Resolved, That it is the indispensable duty of the several towns, precincts and parishes of this province, to make such additions to the salaries or maintenance of their respective ministers, as may honorably support and encourage them in their work; and therein to have regard as well to the time of the contract between the minister and people, and the specie therein mentioned, as to the great and growing difference in the value of the bills of credit, from what they have sometimes been, And this court do therefore most earnestly recommend the speedy and chearful practice of this duty, to the several congregations and religious assemblies within this province: And that this resolve be publicly read on the next Lord's day after the receipt thereof, in the the afternoon before the congregation be dismiss'd; and at the anniversary meeting of the several towns or precincts in the province in the month of March next.

By order of the great and general court or assembly.

*Josiah Willard, Secy.
Rev. qua.*

Surely, the Pastors of the Churches in this State are not so inconsiderable and contemptible an order of men as not to be worth the notice of Government, when almost universally wronged, and to an high degree. Some *special provision* for their relief is a matter of *justice*, and not meer favor, as it is by means of *government bills*, and a *government law*, however contrary to the design of Government, that they are oppressed. And such provision, I am sure, if inclination is not wanting, may be made, and without any great expence either of thought, time, or pains; and the provision might be effectual to put it out of the power of people to turn their ministers off with any thing short of the true value of what they agreed with them for, when they settled with them. This is all they desire: And as it is nothing more than common equity, would it not be hard, may

Previous to the above resolve, and that justice might be done between man and man, it was enacted by government in the year 1698, that the executive courts, upon the forfeiture of the penalty annexed to any agreement, covenant, contract, or other specialties—should *chancer* the forfeiture, and enter up judgment for the *just debt and damages*.—In the year 1741, the judges of the respective courts, in case of a *depreciation of the emitted bills*, were particularly impowered “to give judgment for so much silver as the true debt appears to be, and in want thereof for so much in said province bills, with the addition of so much more as will make amends for the depreciating said bills from their present stated value, or the value at which such other bills should be stated.” In the years 1744, and 1747, additional care was taken by the General Court to prevent oppression by means of the depreciation of their emitted bills.

It will not, I believe, be disowned by any, who have made themselves acquainted with the character of those who constituted our *General Courts* in the years above specified, that they were men of wisdom, integrity, public virtue, and political skill. The specimens they have given of this, in the laws I have refer'd to, are well worthy of notice; and should like laws, which are now more loudly called for than in those times, be made by the present governing powers, I doubt not but they would carry with them effectual relief to thousands of *Widows, Orphans*, and others, who have been the great sufferers in this day of difficulty and distress, not having had it in their power, in common with almost all sorts of persons, to help themselves.

may I not say, would it not be unjust, should they be left to groan under their oppressions, and to have no helper?

Should it be said, if what has been mentioned, was to be carried into execution, it might unhappily tend to increase the depreciation of the currency, which would be a great and public damage.—'Tis obvious to answer, there are no persons in this, or any of the States, who have it in their power, but are so aware of the sunken value of the paper-bills, as to rise proportionably in their demands for whatever they have to dispose of. Common labourers of all kinds, farmers, traders and merchants, take effectual care to ballance, in their commercial conduct, the fall of the medium, with an adequate increase of the price they ask for their commodities: Yea, our General Court have thought it just and equal to increase their *daily stipend*, on account of the *increased price* of what is necessary for their subsistence, while employed on the affairs of the public: Nor have they in this done any other than what is right, and will be acknowledged to be so by all who are acquainted with the situation of things among us: But shall *widows* and *fatherless children*, together with the *clergy* and other *salary-men*, who have it not in their power to help themselves, be the distinguished grand sufferers in this day of oppressive wickedness? When others can help themselves, while these can't, shall Government sit still, and not exert themselves, so that justice may be done them. God forbid, that we should be any longer given up as a prey to the devouring teeth of avaricious worldlings?

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I shall add here, it ought to be deeply impressed on the hearts of our civil rulers, that they are accountable to that God whose throne is in the heavens, in common with other men; and his eyes behold their conduct in their public capacity, and he sees and observes it, not merely as a spectator, but an almighty righteous judge, one who enters all upon record, in order to a reckoning another day. And the day is coming, when they shall all stand on a level with the lowest of the people, before the tremendous bar of the righteous Judge of all the earth, and be called upon to render an account, not only of their private life, but of their whole management as entrusted with the concerns of the public.

If there needs any excuse for that plainness of speech I have now used, I would say;—"my conscience beareth me witness," that what I have offered has proceeded, not from want of *decent respect* for those who are our *civil Rulers*, but from faithfulness to God, "whose I am, and whom I desire to serve," as well as from a tender concern for those thousands among both the *Laity* and *Clergy*, especially *Widows* and *Orphans*, whose groanings, by reason of oppression, are heard in heaven, and may, if they are not *heard on earth*, bring down vengeance from almighty God, in addition to what we have already felt.—

But to go on,

If the *accursed thing* is sin generally prevailing among a people, it must be *taken away* by a *general reformation*. This is the only effectual method in which it can be done; and it is the very one every where directed to in the word of God: and it will, of his mercy,

mercy, through the mediation and merits of the Savior Jesus Christ, avail to the pardon of a people. This will bring them into favor with heaven, and engage the presence of God with them, so as that they shall be able to "stand before their enemies, and tread them under their feet."

What then remains, as the improvement of the present discourse, but that we make it our care, by true humiliation and repentance, to remove sin, that *accursed thing*, from among us. It will not, it cannot with any face of reason, be denied, that sin, in every kind, abounds in the land.—But if I may speak what I believe is the real truth, I would say, *that sin* which is the source of every other sin, and may emphatically be called the ACCURSED THING AMONG US, is *sordid avarice*, an *unsatiable thirst for money*. 'Tis this that has overspread the land with such *base selfishness* as has been destructive of that *public patriotic spirit* which was its glory: 'Tis this that has engaged such multitudes to "*seek their own*," to the neglect of, and in opposition to, "*the weal of others*:" 'Tis this that has been the occasion of that injustice, oppression, and extortion, which is so generally prevalent in all parts of the country: 'Tis this that has reduced great numbers to penury and want, especially among those, who have had it neither in their power, nor inclination, to do by others, as others do by them: 'Tis this, in a word, that has swallowed up all serious attention to "*the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and of Jesus Christ*;" instead of which, the gain of this world has been the *great and general concern*, though at the hazard of that loss of the soul which cannot be compensated. And in this view of our character,

character, as having reigning in us *this avaricious disposition*, which has been, and is still productive of all wickedness, what can we expect but the frowns of heaven upon our military operations? 'Tis true, and ought to be acknowledged with gratitude, the good God has, notwithstanding our great unworthiness, "for his holy name's sake, and to make his power known," given our armies remarkable success in their contests with the enemy, at one time and another. So when Israel went against *Jericho*, it pleased God by a miraculous exertion of almighty power, to shake down the walls of that strongly fenced city, and deliver it into the hands of *Joshua*, the chief Jewish military commander. But *Israel* committed "a trespass in the accursed thing," for which cause they were afterwards defeated, and driven back by their enemies. Thus it has been with us. By remarkable interpositions, in the government of Providence, we have been marvellously succeeded, at one time and another, in our attempts against the enemy; but, as the *accursed thing* has been retained among us, *they*, by like interpositions of heaven, have been succeeded in their attempts against us. An observable instance of this, yea, an instance wherein the God that is above has, in a very conspicuous manner, interposed to serve them, and disserve us, we have in the affair of *Rhode-Island*, with what gave rise to it, and was essentially connected with it.

We all know, the Squadron of capital ships sent to America, by the MONARCH OF FRANCE, was kindly intended for our help in our struggle with Great Britain; and we all had great expectations from what might, humanly speaking, have been effected thereby.

thereby. But we have hitherto been greatly disappointed. But how? Not thro' any failure in the use of proper means, but by the exertions of that almighty Being, "who bringeth the wind out of his treasure," or keepeth it there, as "seemeth good in his sight." By contrary winds, or no winds, the fleet from *France* was detained so much longer than ordinary in coming to the *Delaware*, that the *British ships*, lying in that river with all their stores, had opportunity, before their arrival, to go unmolested to *New-York*. 'Tis true, their looked for approach might be the occasion of the *British army's* quitting *Philadelphia* with such haste, and doing it by the way of the *Jersies*, which proved to them a disgraceful retreat, and the loss of some thousands of their men. But this was soon followed by that which was greatly disadvantageous to us. Upon Admiral *D'Estaing's* leaving the *Delaware* and anchoring at the *Hook*, near *New-York*, an expedition was planned, with a view to dispossess the enemy of *Rhode-Island*, by the joint operation of his fleet, and an army to be immediately raised and sent upon this design. No army, it may be, was sooner raised, or consisted of better men, many of whom, tho' men of fortune, figure, and respectable characters, voluntarily entered upon this service as *privates*, for the good of their country: Notwithstanding which, and the most flattering prospect of success, they were disappointed: Not for want of wisdom in planning the expedition, or of skill and resolution in the officers and men, either of the army or navy; but by interposing frowns in the providence of him who "sitteth King forever." The next day after our troops had landed without the least opposition, and were to have been joined by a num-

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ber

ber of *French regulars*, and the whole *French fleet*, they were called off, by the appearance of Lord How's *naval force*, which obliged the *Count* to go out after, and pursue them: But before any action could commence, there arose, at the command of that God, whom "the winds obey," an unknown storm, in this part of the world, at such a time of the year, which disabled a number of the *French ships*, and made it necessary they should come to *Boston* to refit.—This put an end to our *Rhode-Island expedition*. * and the salutary effects we expected to reap from it. But, as it was wholly owing to the *extraordinary providence of God*, which over-ruled this important design to our sad disappointment, we can find no fault, unless we would reflect blame upon the alwise righteous ruler of the world; instead of which, we might do well to reflect upon the *moral cause* of this divine chastisement, which, without all doubt, is, our not "taking away the *accursed thing* from among us." This can be done, as has been said, in no way but by *reformation*. And the reformation must be general, extending to all orders and degrees of men, among us, from the highest to the lowest; and to all sins, from the greatest to the least. Magistrates must be sensible of their faults, and rectify them; ministers must be humbled for theirs, and amend them; and people in common must be convinced of the evil of their doings, and repent of them. And in order to this
general

* It may not be improper to say here, our Troops, under the blessing of heaven, retreated from *Rhode-Island* with signal success and honor: For they not only went off with all their stores and baggage, without the loss of a single article; but drove away the enemy who endeavored to pursue them, with the loss only of *two hundred and eleven* of our men, killed, wounded, and missing, which was vastly more than ballanced by the loss of more than a *thousand* of their's killed and wounded.

general reformation, every man must endeavour to know the plague of his own heart; every one must come to a pause, and enquire what have I done? and not be satisfied, till every thing amiss is done away, both in heart and life.

Thus let us remove the *accursed thing* from the midst of us; "breaking off our sins by repentance, and our iniquities by turning to God." We shall not do this, unless we betake ourselves for help to the *great dispenser* of grace. He can dispose and influence us to "cease from doing evil, and to learn to do well;" he can enable us to "unloose the bands of wickedness, and let the oppressed go free," and to make it our care to "deal justly; loving mercy, and walking humbly with God." And if, in consequence of our earnest supplications before the mercy-seat in heaven, we shall be wrought upon to become a penitent and obedient people, having faith in God, and in his son Jesus Christ, we may hope, and upon just grounds, that our father's God will be our God, and manifest himself to be so by "riding in the heavens for our help, and in his excellency on the skies;" giving us occasion to triumph, and sing, as in the 144th Psalm, beginning, "Blessed be the Lord our strength, who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to fight; our goodness and our fortress, our high tower and deliverer, in whom we trust: who subdueth the people under us."

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